

5. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

5.1 Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Plan

Land development patterns are directly linked to the agricultural, natural, and cultural resource base of a community. This resource base has limitations with respect to the potential impacts of development activities. Development should be carefully adjusted to coincide with the ability of the agricultural, natural, and cultural resource base to support the various forms of urban and rural development. If a balance is not maintained, the underlying resource base may deteriorate in quality. Therefore, these features need to be considered when making decisions concerning the future conservation and development of the Town of Sand Lake. For further detail on agricultural, natural, and cultural resources in the Town of Sand Lake and Burnett County, please refer to Chapter 5 of the *Inventory and Trends Report*.

The *Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources* element may be the most important element in the *Town of Sand Lake Year 2030 Comprehensive Plan*. Many of the issues and opportunities identified by the town during the planning process (refer to the *Issues and Opportunities* element) are related to these resources. The town is concerned with preserving surface water and groundwater quality, preserving woodlands and wildlife, protecting rural character and scenic views, limiting noise and light pollution, preserving agricultural lands, preventing conflicts between agriculture and rural housing development, preventing conflicts over mineral resources, and preserving historic and archeological sites. Some of the strongest points of consensus on the public opinion surveys (see Appendix A) were related to these resources and include: protecting groundwater, wetlands, and waterways; protecting forests and wildlife habitat; protecting farmland and productive soils; supporting the agriculture industry; protecting rural character; and protecting historical sites and structures.

Agricultural Resources

Agriculture is a significant component of the Town of Sand Lake's landscape, and the town's extensive agriculture operations are connected to a larger region of farming that spans several counties. The town's plan for agricultural resources is to preserve agricultural lands and the right to farm while also allowing for planned development. Higher density residential development is planned on lands that are less suitable for agricultural use. Lower density development would be allowed on lands critical to the town's agricultural base. Key components of the town's approach include establishing a maximum lot size in certain areas, limiting major subdivisions to planned growth areas, encouraging conservation land division design, establishing a system for site planning guidelines, and assessing the regulatory structure necessary to implement the plan. The town may explore the creation of a purchase of development rights (PDR) or purchase of conservation easement (PACE) program in cooperation with Burnett County.

Some agricultural resources are present in the Town of Sand Lake. According to the 2007 Land Use Assessment data, there were approximately 1,500 acres of farmland in the town.

A variety of agriculture operations conduct business in the town and primarily include cash cropping and vegetable farming especially associated with irrigated lands. Dairy has a presence within the Town and hobby farms are also common throughout the town, and are recognized as a component of the town's agricultural base. Prime agricultural soils are located primarily in the western half of the town, but there are scattered locations of prime soils throughout the town. Approximately 1,700 acres of the town is considered prime agricultural soil or farmland if statewide importance.

Agricultural lands are a significant feature in the Town of Sand Lake, and these lands are expected to continue in agricultural use over the long term. This sentiment is reflected in the preferred land use plan (refer to the *Land Use* element) as most of the town's agricultural lands have been mapped for Agriculture (A). The (A) Future Land Use Management Area seeks to preserve and promote a full range of agricultural uses and prevent the conversion of land to uses not consistent with agriculture.

Agricultural uses brings with it unique land management and planning implications. Irrigated lands represent substantial infrastructure investments that turn otherwise unproductive land into reliable areas for vegetable production. Because such a substantial investment has been made to create these productive lands, it is unlikely that they will be converted to other non-agricultural uses during the planning period. Unlike many other types of farmland, the market value of irrigated land is as much as, if not more than, the value of the land for development. Irrigated croplands are associated with intensive land management activities that can have impacts on the environment.

Natural and Cultural Resources

The Town of Sand Lake's plan for natural and cultural resources is to help ensure that existing regulations are followed in the town and to manage growth to prevent negative impacts to these resources. Natural and cultural resources are abundant in the town and are highly valued by the town's residents. Preserving rural character, forest resources, and outdoor recreational opportunities are primary concerns as reflected in the town's goals and objectives, its issues and opportunities, and the results of the planning process surveys. Substantial natural and cultural resources are present in the town and include the following:

- ♦ 6,754 acres of wetlands
- ♦ 4,330 acres of floodplains
- ♦ 2,374 acres of lakes

Many of the same tools that will be used to protect agriculture could also be used to protect natural and cultural resources, including a maximum residential lot size, conservation land division design, site planning guidelines, the zoning map, and a possible transfer or purchase of development rights program. In addition the town may require substantial development proposals assess potential natural and cultural resources impacts. Other tools recommended for cultural resources include maintaining the inventory of historic and archeological sites and creating a historic preservation ordinance.

5.2 Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Goals and Objectives

Community goals are broad, value-based statements expressing public preferences for the long term (20 years or more). They specifically address key issues, opportunities, and problems that affect the community. Objectives are more specific than goals and are more measurable statements usually attainable through direct action and implementation of plan recommendations. The accomplishment of objectives contributes to fulfillment of the goal.

Agricultural Resources

Goal 1: Maintain the viability, operational efficiency, and productivity of the town's agricultural resources for current and future generations.

Objectives:

- A. Help protect through local and state measures the town's productive lands from accelerated erosion and unwise development.
- B. Protect productive farmland from fragmentation and conflicts with non-agricultural uses.
- C. Allow for farming expansion in areas where conflict with existing residential land uses can be prevented or mitigated.
- D. Protect the investments made, in both public infrastructure (roads) and private lands and improvements, that support the agricultural industry.
- E. Encourage creative, unique and niche forms of agriculture.
- F. Promote opportunities to allow farmers and farmland owners to secure financial benefits for the preservation of agricultural lands.
- G. Encourage the use of agricultural science-based Best Management Practices to minimize erosion and groundwater and surface water contamination.
- H. Support programs that provide mentoring of younger farmers.
- I. Increase awareness relative to the importance of protecting the viability of the town's agricultural industry.
- J. Increase awareness and understanding of farming operations, noises, odors and use of roadways by farm vehicles and equipment.

Goal 2: Balance the protection of farmland with the exercise of development rights.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage adequate buffers between agricultural uses and residential neighborhoods to minimize potential conflicts.
- B. Consider establishing site design requirements and standards that direct low density rural residential development to areas that minimize conflicts between residential and agricultural land uses and maintain the rural character of the town.

Natural Resources

Goal 3: Encourage responsible management of the Town's natural resources.

Objectives:

- A. Promote sound forest management practices on private forest lands.
- B. Protect the public's access to public hunting and fishing areas.
- C. Encourage management strategies to create a sustainable relationship between recreational vehicles, watercraft, and natural resources.
- D. Encourage communication between communities regarding the protection of natural resources that cross municipal boundaries.
- E. Educate resource users of the county's environmental quality goals and objectives.

Goal 4: Protect and improve the quality and quantity of the town's ground and surface water.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage land use practices that do not have detrimental impacts on the town's waters and wetlands.
- B. Support wetlands protection in the town.
- C. Discourage the introduction of new contaminants into the town's ground and surface water systems while reducing and possibly eliminating existing sources of contamination.
- D. Promote awareness of potential shoreline development impacts on water quality.
- E. Support data collection and monitoring efforts that further the understanding of factors influencing the quantity, quality, and flow patterns of groundwater.
- F. Support the preservation of natural buffers and building setbacks between intensive land uses and surface water features.
- G. Continue to develop partnerships with neighboring communities, conservation organizations, the county, and state agencies to address water quality issues.

Goal 5: Preserve the natural and scenic qualities of lakes and shorelines in the town.

Objectives:

- A. Support the protection of lakes and rivers.
- B. Support the County's continued evaluation of the lakes and rivers classification. .
- C. Balance the needs for environmental protection and responsible stewardship with reasonable use of private property and economic development.

Goal 6: Balance future development with the protection of natural resources.

Objectives:

- A. Consider the potential impacts of development proposals on groundwater quality and quantity, surface water quality, open space, wildlife habitat, woodlands, and impact of light intrusion on the night sky.
- B. Promote public and private efforts to protect critical habitats for plant and animal life.
- C. Promote the utilization of public and non-profit resource conservation and protection programs such as Managed Forest Law (MFL), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and conservation easements.
- D. Promote renewable energy conservation within new and existing developments.

Goal 7: Protect air quality.

Objectives:

- A. Support County and State outdoor burning and ban the burning of garbage in barrels or other methods.
- B. Work to minimize conflict between residences and agricultural odors and dust.

Goal 8: Preserve and protect woodlands and forest resources for their economic, aesthetic, and environmental values.

Objectives:

- A. Conserve large contiguous wooded tracts in order to reduce forest fragmentation, maximize woodland interiors, and reduce the edge/area ratio.
- B. Consider the use of conservation land division design, which reduces further forest fragmentation.
- C. Support efforts that preserve the integrity of managed forest lands.
- D. Encourage forestry practices that encourage woodland buffers during woodland harvest.
- E. Support educational resources on forestry practices and the benefits to a healthy forest.

Goal 9: Balance future needs for the extraction of mineral resources with potential adverse impacts on the town.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage the documentation of known economically viable non-metallic mineral deposits to ensure proper coordination with any new proposed developed.
- B. Support the county efforts to regulate non-metallic mineral extraction operations to minimize adverse impacts on adjacent land uses and to ensure proper site reclamation.
- C. Consider the potential adverse impacts of proposed metallic mineral extraction operations, and ensure that the siting of such facilities will not negatively impact town and county resources.

Cultural Resources

Goal 10: Preserve the rural character as defined by scenic beauty, a variety of landscapes, undeveloped lands, forests, water resources, wildlife, farms, rural and small town atmosphere, buildings integrated with the landscape, and enjoyment of these surroundings.

Objectives:

- A. Consider the potential impacts of development proposals on those features that the town values.
- B. Discourage the accumulation of junk vehicles, poorly maintained properties, unsightly advertising, and roadside litter.
- C. Encourage the growth and development of visual, performance, and cultural arts.

Goal 11: Preserve significant historical and cultural lands, sites, neighborhoods, and structures that contribute to community identity and character.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage the identification, recording and protection of Identify, record, and protect community features with historical or archaeological significance.
- B. Consider the potential impacts of development proposals on historical and archeological resources.
- C. Promote the history, culture, and heritage of the town.

Goal 12: Strengthen opportunities for youth in the town including youth-oriented activities and facilities and additional job opportunities.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage youth in the comprehensive planning process.
- B. Encourage the involvement of youth in town decision making.
- C. Support youth development programs.

5.3 Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Policies and Recommendations

Policies and recommendations build on goals and objectives by providing more focused responses to the issues that the town is concerned about. Policies and recommendations become primary tools the town can use in making land use decisions. Many of the policies and recommendations cross element boundaries and work together toward overall implementation strategies. Refer to Section 9.5 for an explanation of the strategies cited as sources for many of the policies and recommendations.

Policies identify the way in which activities are conducted in order to fulfill the goals and objectives. Policies that direct action using the word “shall” are advised to be mandatory and regulatory aspects of the implementation of the comprehensive plan. In contrast, those policies that direct action using the words “will” or “should” are advisory and intended to serve as a guide. “Will” statements are considered to be strong guidelines, while “should” statements are considered loose guidelines.

Recommendations are specific actions or projects that the town should be prepared to complete. The completion of these actions and projects is consistent with the town’s policies, and therefore will help the town fulfill the comprehensive plan goals and objectives.

Policies and Recommendations

Agricultural Resources

Policies and Recommendations

- ANC 1. The Town shall work with the County to recognize preferred areas for agricultural expansion and to preserve the best agricultural lands for agricultural use.

- ANC 2. The Town shall require new development be directed to the least productive soils to conserve remaining land for continued agricultural uses, whenever possible.
- ANC 3. The Town shall utilize site planning to preserve agricultural lands (as defined by land use map) when considering new developments.
- ANC 4. The Town shall work with the County to develop a county-wide right to farm policy and ordinance and work with the County to update the existing Farmland Preservation Plan.
- ANC 5. The Town shall require new non-farm residential development be subject to a “nuisance disclaimer”, stringent deed restrictions or other mutual agreement intended to protect the “right-to-farm” of existing and future agricultural operations.
- ANC 6. The Town shall consider conservation and cluster land division design as options for proposed major land divisions to minimize the negative impacts to agriculture, active farms, natural resources, cultural resources, and rural character while accommodating residential development.

Natural Resources

Policies and Recommendations

- ANC 7. The Town will monitor Federal, state and county regulation changes or additions regarding agricultural, natural and cultural resources for their impact on local resources.
- ANC 8. The Town will utilize best management practices, standards and specifications such as those of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to the maximum extent possible for activities approved in forests, shorelands, and wetlands.
- ANC 9. The Town shall require substantial development proposals within the Town to provide an analysis of the potential impacts to natural resources including, but not necessarily limited to, potential impacts to groundwater quality and quantity, surface water, wetlands, floodplains, and woodlands. The depth of analysis required by the Town will be appropriate for the intensity of the proposed development.
- ANC 10. The Town shall support the development of lakes and rivers associations and districts.
- ANC 11. The Town shall work to ensure public lake and river access where possible.

- ANC 12. The Town shall require development proposals in shoreland areas to demonstrate compliance with the Burnett County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Lakeshore development shall be in concert with lakes classifications and the County zoning ordinance.
- ANC 13. The Town shall consider conservation and cluster land division design as options for proposed major land divisions to minimize the negative impacts to agriculture, active farms, natural resources, cultural resources, and rural character while accommodating residential development.
- ANC 14. Environmental corridors shall be defined by location of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources designated wetlands and Federal Emergency Management Agency designated floodplains.
- ANC 15. The Town shall require new development minimize potential negative impacts to natural resources such as shoreline areas, wetlands, and floodplains.
- ANC 16. The Town shall require natural topography, cover, significant landmarks, trees, views and vistas be preserved when designing and locating new roads.
- ANC 17. The Town will support efforts to ban the burning of garbage in barrels or other methods.
- ANC 18. The Town shall require new non-farm development be subject to a nuisance disclaimer or other right to farm regulation.
- ANC 19. The Town shall consider the use of cluster or conservation land division to reduce further forest fragmentation.
- ANC 20. The Town shall support efforts to preserve the integrity of managed forest lands.
- ANC 21. The Town shall encourage forestry practices to encourage woodland buffers during woodland harvest.
- ANC 22. The Town shall support educational resources on forestry practices and the benefits to a healthy forest.
- ANC 23. The Town shall encourage documentation of known economically viable metallic and non-metallic mineral deposits to ensure proper coordination with any new proposed development.
- ANC 24. The Town shall support county efforts to regulate metallic and non-metallic mineral extraction operations to minimize adverse impacts on adjacent land uses and to ensure proper site reclamation.

Cultural Resources

Policies and Recommendations

- ANC 25. The Town shall require new development minimize negative impacts to rural character as defined by locally significant landmarks, scenic views and vistas, rolling terrain, undeveloped lands, farmlands and woodlands, aesthetically pleasing landscapes and buildings, limited light pollution, and quiet enjoyment of these surroundings.
- ANC 26. The Town shall support the County nuisance ordinance.
- ANC 27. The Town shall require substantial development proposals to provide the Town with an analysis of the potential cultural resources impacts including, but not necessarily limited to, potential impacts to historic sites, archeological sites, and other cultural resources. The depth of analysis required by the Town will be appropriate for the intensity of the proposed development.
- ANC 28. The Town shall work with communities and groups and organizations such as the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Burnett County Historical Society to maintain the map and database of historic and archeological sites.
- ANC 29. The Town shall support identification, recording and promote preservation of historical, cultural and archaeological sites within the Town.
- ANC 30. The Town shall work with youth in the development of proposals and programs that directly affect the younger residents of the Town.

5.4 Agriculture, Natural, and Cultural Resources Programs

For descriptions of agricultural, natural and cultural resources programs potentially available to the community, refer to the *Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources* element of the *Burnett County Inventory and Trends Report*.

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